

The Absence of Luck

by Primordial Soul

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Summary: He never lost. His luck always carried him through. He always managed to save everything around him. Now, however, his luck has run out. He had lost. And the stakes hadn't been higher. Halo 4 Ending Spoilers.

The Absence of Luck

****AN: ****Hey, it's Primordial Soul with The Absence of Luck

I know I said I'd work on Ace, but ideas swarmed me and I was unable to work on my stories until at least some of them are written down. For example, this slightly AU one shot of the Halo 4 ending.

Halo 4 is now out and it's absolutely incredible. With it's release spawned numerous plot bunnies, two of which I plan on pursuing. This is the first one, which basically is a rehash of the ending with tweak. BTW, after this, my updates will probably continue to be slow. I've finished my college work and homework is low, but with Halo 4, I'm going to be very distracted.

Warning: Halo 4 spoilers! Do not read if you want to avoid them! Ending will go slightly AU. If you have played the game, you'll know where. I also didn't explain too much since if you're reading this, you have either played the game or it's already spoiled for you, so you know what I'm talking about.

Quick blurb about Halo 4: OMG. The campaign, the graphics, the soundtrack, it's all incredible. Even if you have never played a Halo game in your life, at the very least rent it to play the campaign. It's worth it.

I don't own anything!

Hope you enjoy this!

THE ABSENCE OF LUCK: July 27, 2557

_ "For us, the storm has passed... the war is over. But let us never forget those who journeyed into the howling dark and did not return. For their decision required courage beyond measure; sacrifice, and unshakable conviction that their fight... our fight, was elsewhere."
-_Lord Hood, Hillside Memorial, March 3rd, 2553

Master Chief Petty Officer John 117 slowly moved across the light bridge to where the Didact was suspended. He tightly gripped the Battle Rifle in his hands as he advanced. Inside his MJOLNER armor, he could see the battle above Earth, the Composer firing down onto the planet, turing humans into digitized slaves of the Didact, and the small indicator of the nuclear bomb he had to blow this ship to hell. He couldn't fail. Too much was at stake. Humanity, the Spartans... _her._

Cortana was his anchor, his sole link to the humanity he had always lacked. She was at his side for eight years and had formed something that was incapable of being described. He had entered the hell of High Charity to save her and defied a commanding officer's order to turn her over for decommission. And after all this time, she now faced the fate of literally thinking herself to death.

_ "I have been in operation for eight years, Chief. AI's deteriorate after seven," _

That would not happen, John thought. He promised Cortana that he'd save her from Rampancy, save her from the fate all AI's faced. And he kept his promises.

_ "Don't make a girl a promise you can't keep" _

John refocused onto the beam where the Didact was. He couldn't make out the Didact's form in the brilliant red beam. He continued forward, eyes and sensors focused on trying to find the Forerunner. He had taken Cortana from him and he would pay.

_ "Cortana!" he cried as he watched the pedestal holding her chip dissolve into sparks of light._

"You persist too long after your own defeat."

John sharply turned around after hearing the Didact speak up. His eyes narrowed and focused through the scope, trying to locate his target. His heart rate sped up a little as he subconsciously remembered his last encounter with the Promethean on Requiem.

_ "Even these beasts recognize what you are oblivious to, human." _

_ "The Librarian left little to chance, didn't she?" _

_ "If you haven't mastered even these primitives, then man has not attained the Mantle" _

_ "Time was your ally, human â€| and now it has abandoned you." _

_ "The Forerunners have returned. This tomb is now yours" _

After several seconds of searching with little results, John turned back around to face the beam. He began to slowly advance again toward the Composer.

"Come then, Warrior. Have your resolution."

John, with the speed and grace only his augmentations could provide, whirled around to bring his gun onto the Didact's floating form behind him. He was too slow, as with a wave of his hand, the Didact sent him flying. As he sailed through the air, both the gun and nuke fell out of his hands. He hit

the ground, grunting as he watched the nuke, necessary for humanities survival, slide farther down the bridge.

He rapidly got to his feet and took note of his position. The Didact was standing on his right, snarling at the defiance a mere human was giving him. To his left was the nuke. Quickly making up his mind, he rushed the nuke. His duty came before personal pride.

As his hand reached out to grab the nuke, his armor suddenly locked up as the Didact focused his constraint fields on John. He struggled with all his might to overcome the fields, but the field proved too strong. He was pulled off his feet and hovered in the air against his will as the Didact manipulated the field, just like their first encounter.

"So misguided" The Didact murmured as he observed the human before him. He was a mere pest, unworthy of the inheritance they left behind. If this warrior was the best they had... then he was justified in their purge. He was doing them a favor by composing them. They would ascend to greater forms, greater beings. Couldn't they see that?

John continued to struggle as the Didact moved him off the bridge and into empty space. He couldn't lost, he refused to lose. He always won, he always kept his promises. He would not let this Forerunner stop him!

"You know me. When I make an promise..."

_ "You keep it" _

He remembered that king of the hill game long ago, where he always won against the neighborhood kids. He remembered the first day of basic training, meeting his brothers and sisters.

_"You will be the defenders of Earth and all her colonies" _

He remembered the day he received his MJLONER armor, the sheer power it gave.

_"I think I'm in love" _

He remembered the war, where despite his victories, Humanity continued to lose against the Covenant hoard.

_"Your destruction is the will of the Gods &€| and we are their instrument," _

He remembered the day where he met her, in a laboratory on Reach. He remembered the training exercise where the first bonds of trust were made.

There's two of us in here now, remember?

He remembered Reach, Alpha Halo, Earth, Delta Halo, High Charity, the Ark, Requiem, Eta Halo. He remembered all the sacrifices, all the pain, all the battles he fought, all the promises he kept.

"Master Chief, you mind telling me what you're doing on that ship?"

_ "Sir, finishing this fight" _

He would finish this one.

"Humanity's imprisonment is a kindness" The Didact said with certainty, increasing the force exerted on John. He was doing what should have been done a hundred thousand years ago. The destruction of the human race.

John could feel the circuits and wires in his suit sizzle and spark from the pressure. His armor would not be able to take much more abuse. It seemed over to any observer that could watch these events. It wasn't. Words he had never heard that were spoken long ago reached out to touch this very moment.

_"The Master Chief is dead." _

_ "His file reads Missing in Action." _

_ "Catherine... Spartan's never die." _

_ "Your mistake is seeing Spartans as military hardware. My Spartans are humanity's next step. Our destiny as a species. Do not underestimate them. But most of all... do not underestimate him." _

Around the two warriors, auras of blue light began to emerge from the hard light bridge. As they rose, they began to form into a familiar figure. The Didact looked around, surprised while John began to feel relief. She wasn't dead. She was watching his back just like he always watched hers.

"If that's the case, you won't mind if we return the favor!" Cortana's multiple avatars spat out in her usual snarky way.

"Your compassion for mankind is misplaced!" the Didact shot back, angered at the interference of this ancilla.

"I'm not doing this for mankind!" they all cried out as they advanced on the Didact. As they touched him, beams of hard light rose from the bridge to bind him. As the Didact began to struggle against his bonds, the constraint field holding John dissipated. He began to fall and caught himself on the ledge of the bridge.

As he hung on for dear life, John could feel the infamous Spartan time kicking in, seemingly slowing the world down. Cortana was risking her existence to save him. He would make sure he would make

the best of it.

John pulled himself up onto the bridge and locked eyes with the Didact, still trapped in his bonds. John fingered a pulse grenade and looked up at the Didact. He could plant the grenade onto the Didact's armor and make sure the Didact wasn't a threat. As he glanced at the grenade, he noticed the nuke in the corner of his eyes, still unarmed. John decided on his course of action. The Didact was contained. He needed to do what he was sent to do.

John approached the nuke and grabbed hold of it. As he turned the nuke and armed it, a roar sent John spinning around to face a charging Didact, who had broken free of his bonds. His massive bulk crashed into John's own and the force of the collision sent them both over the edge.

The two began to fall, picking up speed as they plummeted towards the Composer below them. They struggled over the nuke, the blinking red light hinting at its armed state.

John freed an arm and punched the Didact's un-helmeted face. It forced the Didact away from him, clutching the place where John's armored fist hit him. However, the Didact's other arm ripped the nuke from John's hands. The two were forced apart with the nuke floating between them.

The two stared at each other across the chasm, with an armed nuke capable of killing them and destroying the entire ship between them. This was it.

They rapidly advanced toward the nuke, the Didact using his suit and John using his integrated thruster pack. John reached the nuke slightly ahead of the Didact. As his fingers graced the nuke, the Didact grabbed John and forced him away from the nuke. The Didact grabbed John's neck and began to squeeze.

John's vision to blacken as he verged on the edge of unconsciousness from lack of air. He would not fail now. He'd come to far to lose.

"Your efforts are irrelevant. You will die here and humanity will be composed." The Didact growled in the face of this meddlesome human as they reached terminal velocity. Didn't this human see that its actions meant nothing?

John chuckled at the Didact's words, surprising the old Forerunner. "Die, don't you know? Spartans never die."

John head butted the Forerunner and as his grip slackened, he tossed the Forerunner to the side. As he refocused on the nuke, he noticed he didn't have enough time to reach the nuke before they entered a region of support beams, which would make it impossible to reach the nuke. Time to improvise.

The Didact turned to face the human just in time to see John grab his combat knife and fling it toward the nuke. The world seemed to slow down to them as they watched the knife fly across the chasm and watched as its handle hit the detonate command.

As the nuke exploded and its heat washed over them both, John could

only feel peace. Humanity was saved and Cortana would stay with him forever. They were in the free.

"Olly olly oxen free." John whispered as his vision went black.
"We're free. We're all out in the free."

* * *

><p>John slowly came back to awareness, something he never thought he would have. With a groan, he stood up and observed the hard-light shield encasing him. With a jolt, he realized that Cortana wasn't with him.<p>

"Cortana? Cortana, do you read? Cortana, come in" John ordered, slowly feeling the icy fear he could always overcome. They were always together. They always came through together. Nobody gets left behind.

John heard a noise behind him and turned to face a human sized Cortana slowly walking towards him. John inwardly sighed in relief. She was okay. They were safe. But how...

"How?" John asked. In response, Cortana gave a quirky smile.

"Oh, so I'm the strangest thing you've seen all day?"

John smiled slightly. She always knew what to say. Something suddenly came to him.

"But if we're here..."

Cortana smiled again, "It worked. You did it. Just like you always do."

John looked around and asked, "So, how do we get out of here?" They did it. Earth was safe. The Composer was destroyed. All that was left was...

"I'm not coming with you this time."

John suddenly turned towards her, eyes wide in shock. No, no this wasn't happening. Cortana was just suffering from rampancy again. She really didn't mean what she said. She couldn't.

"What?"

"Most of me was down there. I only held back enough to keep you safe."

"No. That's not... we go together." John ordered. This could not be happening. After everything they went through, this is how they are split apart? Nobody gets left behind.

"It's already done." Cortana whispered.

"I am not leaving you here." John said, almost begging. He always won. He would not lose now.

"John..." Cortana sighed as she approached him. She reached out a hand and touched John's battered armor. "Oh, how I longed to do

that..."

John could feel tears filling his eyes. Not like this. "It was my job to take care of you"

Cortana was quick to console him. "We were supposed to take care of each other. And we did"

John could barely hold back his tears. All this time he had been wondering her question.

"Which one of us is the human and which one is the machine?"

He would never get to answer that question.

"Cortana... please," She couldn't leave him. She was a part of him he lacked since he was seven. He would be broken without her.

Cortana smiled slightly and slowly began to back away from him.

"Wait!" John said, holding out a hand.

She continued to back away as her figure dissolved. The last thing he heard her say was "Welcome home, John"

John lowered his arm in the blunt truth of their situation. As he stood there, incased in the hard-light bubble falling along side the debris of the Didact's ship, he was numb to everything around him, he could feel the tears sliding down his face. His luck had finally run out. He had finally lost.

And the stakes hadn't been higher.

**AN: **Hope you enjoyed this oneshot!

I was put together in a mere two hours and the quality isn't fantastic, but I had a good time writing this. More chapters of either _Ace, Blade, _the update and radically changed _Mantle, _and possibly _Lord _chapters will hopefully be up by Thanksgiving.

See you soon!

Primordial Soul

End
file.